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Pat Resper/Technology Center 2600/Office P/2600		703/872-9306

FROM: Wayne O. Stacy **PHONE:** (720) 566-4125 **REPLY FAX:** (720) 566-4099

RE: Serial No. 09/687,036; Atty Docket No. NVID-030/00US/P000172

NUMBER OF PAGES, INCLUDING COVER PAGE: 49	Client Number: 140060-2064
Originals Will Not Follow	Requestor #: 11762

MESSAGE:

Attached is a copy of the fax (with enclosures) originally sent February 12, 2004, along with confirmation pages from our machine and the PTO.

Please call me once you have had a chance to review the enclosed materials.

Sincerely,

Wayne Stacy
(720) 566-4125

**If you do not receive all of the pages, please call
Sherry Duncan Bitler at (720) 566-4019 as soon as possible.**

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DATE: February 12, 2004

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Pat Resper/Technology Center 2600 – Office P/2600		703/872-9306

FROM: Wayne O. Stacy   PHONE: (720) 566-4125   REPLY FAX: (720) 566-4099

RE: NVID-030/00US/P000172

NUMBER OF PAGES, INCLUDING COVER PAGE: 46	Client Number: 140060-2064

MESSAGE:

Good afternoon, Ms. Resper, following up on our conversation on Tuesday, 2/10/04, with respect to the status of this application, enclosed are copies of the following documents:

1.   9/11/03 - Transmittal forwarding Petition Requesting Withdrawal of Holding of Abandonment;
        9/11/03 - Petition Requesting Withdrawal of Holding of Abandonment;
        9/11/03 – Conformed Express Mail receipt showing mailing of 9/11/03 Materials
2.   8/13/03 – Transmittal forwarding Notice of Appeal and related papers
        8/13/03 – Petition for Extension of Time
        8/13/03 – Notice of Appeal from the Examiner to the Board of Patent Appeals and Interferences;
        8/13/03 – Conformed Postcard showing receipt of 8/13/03 Materials by PTO
        8/13/03 – Conformed Express Mail receipt showing mailing of 8/13/03 Materials
3.   5/9/03 - Transmittal of Response to Office Action;
        5/9/03 – Response to 2/13/03 Office Action;
        5/9/03 – Conformed Postcard showing receipt of 5/9/03 Materials by PTO
        5/9/03 – Conformed Express Mail receipt showing mailing of 5/9/03 Materials (stamped erroneously by U.S. Post Office as 5/8/03, but dated 5/9/03 by U.S. Post Office Clerk.

Please contact me to discuss the current status of the case. Thank you. Wayne Stacy

211188 v1/CO
4SYC01!.DOC

1

Rev. 11/19/2001

Attorney Docket No. NVID-030/00US/P000172   **PATENT**

Express Mail Label Number: EL 870631093 US
Date of Deposit: September 11, 2003

I hereby certify that this paper or fee is being deposited with the United States Postal Service "Express Mail Post Office to Addressee" service under 37 CFR 1.10 on the date indicated above and is addressed to the Mail Stop Petition, Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-4150.
Date: September 11, 2003   By: _Sherry Duncan Bitler_
                                                      Sherry Duncan Bitler

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re application of VAN DYKE et al.   Confirmation No.: 8044

Serial No.:   09/687,036   Examiner: Cliff N. VO

Filed: 10/12/2000   Art Unit: 2671

FOR: METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR MANAGING AND ACCESSING DEPTH DATA IN A
               COMPUTER GRAPHICS SYSTEM

Mail Stop Petition
Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

TRANSMITTAL

Enclosed are the following documents:

[x]   Petition Requesting Withdrawal of Holding of Abandonment Under 37 C.F.R. §1.818(a); and

[x]   Return receipt postcard.

[]   A check for the total fee is attached.

[]   Please charge $xxx to Deposit Account No. 03-3117 for the total fee. This paper is being submitted in duplicate.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any appropriate fees under 37 C.F.R. §§1.16, 1.17, and 1.21 that may be required by this paper, and to credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 03-3117.
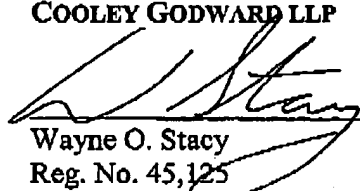
203940 v1/CO
4DD0011.DOC

Rev. 11/19/2001

Attorney Docket No. NVID-030/00US/P000172
Serial No. 09/687,036
Page 2

COOLEY GODWARD LLP
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3000 El Camino Real
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Fax: (720) 566-4099

Respectfully submitted,
COOLEY GODWARD LLP

By: _____

Wayne O. Stacy
Reg. No. 45,125

203940 v1/CO
4DD001!.DOC

Attorney Docket No: NVID-030/00US/P000172   PATENT·

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re application of VAN DYKE, et al.

Serial No.:   09/687,036   Examiner: Cliff N. VO

Filed: 10/12/2000   Art Unit: 2671

Confirmation No.: 8044

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FOR: METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR MANAGING AND ACCESSING DEPTH DATA IN A
        COMPUTER GRAPHICS SYSTEM

Mail Stop Petition
Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

PETITION REQUESTING WITHDRAWAL OF HOLDING OF ABANDONMENT UNDER 37 C.F.R §1.181(a)

Applicants received a Notice of Abandonment, dated August 27, 2003, for this · application. Applicants filed timely responses and submit that the Notice of Abandonment was issued in error. In particular, Applicants filed a Notice of Appeal by Express Mail on August 13, 2003, which is within the six month statutory time limit. The Express Mail receipt shows a mailing date of August 13, 2003, and the express mail number on the Notice of Appeal matches the number on the receipt. Accordingly, Applicants submit that the Notice of Appeal was timely filed and request that the Notice of Abandonment be withdrawn.

Applicants also request that the Examiner consider the Applicants Response to Office Action that was filed on May 9, 2003 by Express Mail. This response puts the application in condition for allowance, and Applicants respectfully request that it be entered in this case.

According to PAIR, however, the PTO did not process Applicant's May 9 Response to Office Action or its August 13 Notice of Appeal. The PTO did return stamped postcards for

Attorney Docket No. NVID-030/00US/P000172
Serial No. 09/687,036
Page 2

each of these filings. Applicants include copies of these documents and their express mail receipts with this petition. The following documents for Applicant's May 9 filing are included:

1.   Transmittal of Response to Office Action (dated May 9);
2.   Response to Office Action (dated May 9);
3.   One Return Postcard (stamped May 9); and
4.   Copy of Express Mail receipt.

The following documents for Applicant's August 13 Notice of Appeal are included:
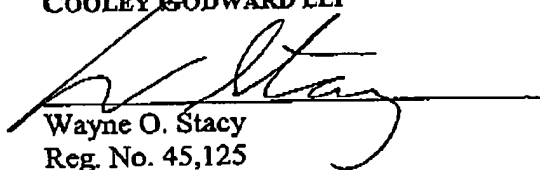
1.   Transmittal (dated August 13);
2.   Petition for Extension of Time (dated August 13);
3.   Notice of Appeal (dated August 13);
4.   One Return Postcard (stamped August 13); and
5.   Copy of Express Mail receipt.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any appropriate fees under 37 C.F.R. §§1.16, 1.17, and 1.21 that may be required by this paper, and to credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 03-3117.

COOLEY GODWARD LLP
Attention: Patent Group
Five Palo Alto Square
3000 El Camino Real
Palo Alto, CA 94306-2155
Tel: (720) 566-4125
Fax: (720) 566-4099

By:

Respectfully submitted,
COOLEY GODWARD LLP

Wayne O. Stacy
Reg. No. 45,125

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2

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The following has been received in the U.S. Patent Office on the date stamped hereon:

[X]   Transmittal;
[X]   Petition Requesting Withdrawal of Holding of Abandonment Under 37 C.F.R.
§1.818(a); and
[X]   Postcard

Express Mail Label No. EL 870631093 US

Attorney Docket No.: NVID-030/00US/P000172

Mail Date: September 11, 2003

Attorney/Secretary: WStacy/SBitler

2

Attorney Docket No. NVID-030/00US/P000172   **PATENT**

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re Application of VAN DYKE et al.	Confirmation No.:	8044
Serial No.: 09/687,036	Group Art Unit:	2671
Filed: 10/12/2000	Examiner:	Cliff N. VO
FOR: METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR MANAGING AND ACCESSING DEPTH DATA IN A COMPUTER GRAPHICS SYSTEM		

Mail Stop Appeal Brief-Patents
Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

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Enclosed are the following documents:

[x]   Petition for Extension of Time;
[x]   Notice of Appeal; and
[x]   Return receipt postcard

[]   A check for the total fee is attached.

[x]   Please charge $1,250.00 to Deposit Account No. 03-3117 for the total fee. This paper is being submitted in duplicate.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any appropriate fees under 37 C.F.R. §§1.16, 1.17, and 1.21 that may be required by this paper, and to credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 03/3117.

202332 v1/CO
4C4C01!.DOC
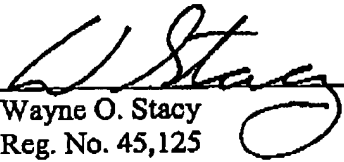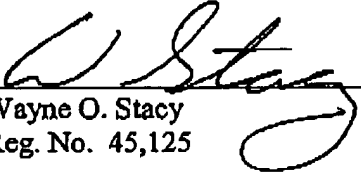
Attorney Docket No. NVID-030/00US/P000172

Serial No.: 09/687,036

Page 2

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Respectfully submitted,
COOLEY GODWARD LLP

By:

Wayne O. Stacy
Reg. No. 45,125

202332 v1/CO
4C4C01!.DOC

Attorney Docket No. NVID-030/00US/P000172   **PATENT**

Express Mail Label Number: EL 870631575 US
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I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service with sufficient postage as Express Mail in an envelope addressed to the Mail Stop Appeal Brief-Patents, Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450 on August 13, 2003.

By: ___*Sherry Duncan Bitler*___
                 Sherry Duncan Bitler

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re Application of VAN DYKE et al.   Confirmation No.:   044

Serial No.:   09/687,036   Group Art Unit: 2671

Filed: 10/12/2000   Examiner: Cliff N. VO

FOR: METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR MANAGING AND ACCESSING DEPTH DATA IN A COMPUTER GRAPHICS SYSTEM

Mail Stop Appeal Brief-Patents
Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

PETITION FOR EXTENSION OF TIME

Sir:

A three month extension of time is requested to the Office Action dated February 13, 2003, to November 13, 2003; the extension fee is:

       [] $465.00   [x] $930.00

[]   The shortened statutory period has been reset by an Advisory Action dated .

[]   An extension fee in the amount of $ is enclosed.

[x]   Please charge $930.00 to Deposit Account No. 03-3117.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any appropriate fees under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16, 1.17 and 1.21 that may be required by this paper, and to credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 03-3117. This paper is submitted in duplicate.

COOLEY GODWARD LLP
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Respectfully submitted,
COOLEY GODWARD LLP

By:

Wayne O. Stacy
Reg. No. 45,125

202330 v1/CO
4C4@011.DOC

Attorney Docket No. NVID-030/00US/P000172   **PATENT**

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P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450 on August 13, 2003.

By: _Sherry Duncan Bitler_
Sherry Duncan Bitler

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re application of VAN DYKE et al.   Confirmation No.: 8044

Serial No.:   09/687,036   Examiner: Cliff N. VO

Filed: 10/12/2000   Art Unit: 2671

FOR: METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR MANAGING AND ACCESSING DEPTH DATA IN A
           COMPUTER GRAPHICS SYSTEM

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NOTICE OF APPEAL FROM THE EXAMINER TO THE BOARD
OF PATENT APPEALS AND INTERFERENCES UNDER 37 C.F.R. §1.191

Applicants hereby appeal to the Board of Patent Appeals and Interferences from the

decision of the Examiner dated February 13, 2003.

[]   **A check in the amount of $___ for the Notice of Appeal and Extension of
        Time fee is attached.**

[x]   **Please charge $1,250.00 to Deposit Account No. 03-3117 for the total fee
        which includes the $320.00 fee for the Notice of Appeal and the $930.00 fee
        for an Extension of Time for Three Months. This paper is being submitted in
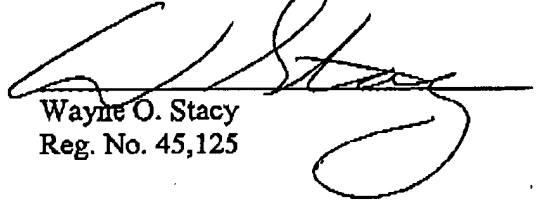   duplicate.**

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any appropriate fees under 37 C.F.R.

§§ 1.16, 1.17 and 1.21 that may be required by this paper, and to credit any overpayment, to

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Attorney Docket No. SIEBO18/00US

Serial No. 09/261,771

Page 2

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202345 v1/CO
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Respectfully submitted,
COOLEY GODWARD LLP

By:

Wayne O. Stacy
Reg. No. 45,125

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Attorney Docket No.: NVID-030/00US/P000172

Mail Date: August 13, 2003

Serial No.: 09/687,036

Attorney/Secretary: WStacy/SBitler

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3

Attorney Docket No. NVID-030/00US/P000172   **PATENT**

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re application of VAN DYKE, etl.   Examiner: Cliff N. VO

Serial No.   09/687,036   Art Unit: 2671

Filed:.   10/12/2000

FOR: METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR MANAGING AND ACCESSING DEPTH DATA IN A
              COMPUTER GRAPHICS SYSTEM

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P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

TRANSMITTAL OF RESPONSE TO OFFICE ACTION

Enclosed are the following documents in response to the Office Action mailed February
13, 2003 for the above-identified application:

[X]   Response to Office Action; and

[X]   One Return Post Card.

The fee has been calculated as follows:

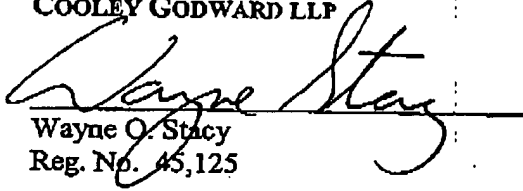|	NO. OF CLAIMS		EXTRA CLAIMS	RATE	FEE
Basic Application Fee					$740.00
Total Claims		– 20 =		x $18.00	$0.00
Independent Claims		– 3 =		x $84.00	$0.00
If multiple dependent claims are presented, add $280.00					$0.00
Total Application Fee					$0.00
If an Assertion of Entitlement to Small Entity Status is enclosed, subtract 50% of Total Application Fee					$0.00
Other fees: (specify)					$0.00

196679 v1/CO
47RB01LDOC

[]   Cooley Check No. _____ in the amount of $_____ for the two month extension fee is attached.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any appropriate fees under 37 C.F.R. §§1.16, 1.17, and 1.21 that may be required by this paper, and to credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 03-3117.

COOLEY GODWARD LLP
ATTN: Patent Group
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3000 El Camino Real
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Tel: (720) 566-4125
Fax: (720) 566-4099

Respectfully submitted,
COOLEY GODWARD LLP

By: _____
Wayne O. Stacy
Reg. No. 45,125

196679 v1/CO
47RB011.DOC

Attorney Docket No. NVID-030/00US/P000172

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Post Office to Addressee" service under 37 CFR 1.10 on the date indicated above and is addressed to Mail
Stop AF, Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450.
Date: May 9, 2003   By: _Sherry Duncan Bitler_
                                                Sherry Duncan Bitler

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re application of   VAN DYKE, et al.

Serial No.   09/687,036   Examiner: Cliff N. Vo

Filed: 10/12/2000   Art Unit: 2671

FOR: METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR MANAGING AND ACCESSING DEPTH DATA IN A
                COMPUTER GRAPHICS SYSTEM

Mail Stop AF
Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

RESPONSE TO OFFICE ACTION

Sir:

Responsive to the Official Action of February 13, 2003, Applicants respectfully

request entry of the following amendments and consideration of the following remarks.

Claims 54 and 56-59 are amended, and claim 55 is cancelled.

196098 v1/CO
47B601!.DOC

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend claims 54 and 56-59. Please cancel claim 55 without prejudice.

1. (previously amended)   A computer graphics system for processing image data

including Z data for use in displaying three dimensional images on a display unit,

comprising:

      a depth buffer providing for temporary storage of Z data; and

      a graphics processing unit having a graphics engine for generating image data

including Z data, and a memory interface unit communicatively coupled to the graphics

engine and communicatively coupled to the depth buffer via a depth buffer interface, the

graphics processing unit being operative to compress at least a portion of the generated Z

data, to write the compressed portion of Z data to the depth buffer via the depth buffer

interface in a compressed format, to read portions of compressed Z data from the depth

buffer via the depth buffer interface, and to decompress the compressed Z data read from

the buffer;

      wherein the graphics engine comprises:

          a plurality of graphics pipeline stages for generating image data including

Z data; and

          a Z raster operations unit communicatively coupled with the memory

interface unit, the Z raster operations unit for receiving the generated Z data, and being

operative to compress selected portions of the generated Z data, to receive compressed Z

data from the depth buffer via the memory unit interface and the depth buffer interface,

and to decompress the compressed Z data;

whereby effective Z data bandwidth through the depth buffer interface is

maximized in order to facilitate fast depth buffer access operations.

2. (original)   A computer graphics system as recited in claim 1 wherein the graphics

processing unit is operative to compress selected ones of a plurality of tiles of the

generated Z data based on a quantitative analysis of the Z data, each of the tiles of Z data

having a plurality of pixels arranged in an array, each of the pixels being disposed at an

associated (X,Y) coordinate of the array, and having an associated Z value.

3. (original)   A computer graphics system as recited in claim 2 wherein the graphics

processing unit is operative to perform a process of compressing a tile of Z data, the

process including a step of determining a plane based on the (X,Y) coordinates and

associated Z values of selected ones of the pixels of the tile.

4. (original)   A computer graphics system as recited in claim 2 wherein the graphics

processing unit is operative to perform a process of compressing a tile of Z data, the

process comprising the steps of:

     reading an anchor Z value associated with a selected anchor pixel of the tile;

     reading a major horizontal Z value associated with a major horizontal pixel

displaced a first predetermined number of pixels in a horizontal direction from the anchor

pixel;

     determining a major horizontal difference value between the anchor Z value and

the major horizontal Z value;

determining a horizontal gradient value based on the horizontal difference value

and the first predetermined number of pixels;

reading a major vertical Z value associated with a major vertical pixel displaced a

second predetermined number of pixels in a vertical direction from the anchor pixel;

determining a major vertical difference value between the anchor Z value and the

major vertical Z value;

determining a vertical gradient value based on the vertical difference value and

the second predetermined number of pixels;

determining an ideal plane based on the anchor Z value, the horizontal gradient

value, and the vertical gradient value;

for each of a plurality of remaining pixels of the tile, determining an associated

ideal Z value lying in the ideal plane at the (X,Y) coordinate of the associated remaining

pixel; and

for each of the remaining pixels, determining an associated minor Z difference

value by determining a difference between the associated ideal Z value and the associated

Z value.

5. (original)   A computer graphics system as recited in claim 4 wherein the process

further comprises the steps of:

using the major horizontal difference value as a first major difference value in the

compressed format;

using the major vertical difference value as a second major difference value in the

compressed format; and

196098 v1/CO
47B6011.DOC   4

using the minor Z difference values as minor difference values in the compressed format.

6. (original)   A computer graphics system as recited in claim 4 wherein a compressed tile of Z data comprises:

a first portion of compressed Z data including the anchor Z value, the major vertical difference value, and the major horizontal difference value; and

a second portion of compressed Z data including at least one of the minor difference values.

7. (original)   A computer graphics system as recited in claim 4 wherein the graphics processing unit is further operative to perform the steps of:

determining if the horizontal difference value is greater than a predetermined maximum value; and

if the horizontal difference value is greater than the predetermined maximum value, writing the tile of Z data to the depth buffer via the depth buffer interface in an uncompressed format.

8. (original)   A computer graphics system as recited in claim 4 wherein the graphics processing unit is further operative to perform the steps of:

determining if the vertical difference value is greater than a predetermined maximum value; and

if the vertical difference value is greater than the predetermined maximum value,

writing the tile of Z data to the depth buffer via the depth buffer interface in an

uncompressed format.

9. (original)   A computer graphics system as recited in claim 4 wherein the graphics

processing unit is further operative to perform the steps of:

determining if any of the associated minor Z difference values is greater than a

predetermined maximum value; and

if any of the minor Z difference values is greater than a predetermined maximum

value, writing the tile of Z data to the depth buffer via the depth buffer interface in an

uncompressed format.

10. (previously cancelled)

11. (previously amended)   A computer graphics system as recited in claim 1 wherein

the Z raster operations unit is operative to perform read modify write operations

including the steps of:

reading previous Z data from the depth buffer via the memory unit interface and

the depth buffer interface;

merging the previous read Z data with associated portions of the generated Z data

to provide merged Z data; and

writing the merged Z data to the depth buffer via the memory unit interface and

the depth buffer interface.

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12. (previously amended)   A computer graphics system as recited in claim 1 wherein the Z raster operations unit is operative to perform read modify write operations including the steps of:

reading previous compressed Z data from the depth buffer via the memory unit interface and the depth buffer interface;

decompressing the read Z data;

merging the decompressed Z data with associated portions of the generated Z data to provide merged Z data; and

writing the merged Z data to the depth buffer via the memory unit interface and the depth buffer interface.

13. (original) A computer graphics system as recited in claim 11 wherein the read modify write operations further include the steps of:

compressing the merged Z data; and

writing the merged Z data to the depth buffer via the memory unit interface and the depth buffer interface in a compressed format.

14. (original) A computer graphics system as recited in claim 2 wherein the Z raster operations unit is operative to perform read modify write operations including the steps of:

reading a tile of previous Z data from the depth buffer via the memory unit interface and the depth buffer interface;

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merging the previous read Z data with associated portions of the generated Z data to provide a tile of merged Z data;

determining if the tile of merged Z data may be compressed; and

if the merged Z data may be compressed, writing the tile of merged Z data to the depth buffer via the memory unit interface and the depth buffer interface in a compressed format.

15. (original) A computer graphics system as recited in claim 2 wherein the Z raster operations unit comprises:

a read operation data accumulation unit for receiving the generated Z data, and being operative to accumulate portions of generated Z data associated with a current tile region, and to provide the accumulated Z data;

a decompression engine for receiving a previously written compressed tile of read Z data that is read from the Z buffer via the memory interface unit in a compressed format, the decompression engine being operative to decompress the previously written compressed tile to provide decompressed read Z data; and

a test unit for receiving the accumulated Z data and the decompressed read Z data, and being operative to compare portions of the accumulated Z data with portions of the decompressed read data, and being operative to provide selected Z data.

16. (original) A computer graphics system as recited in claim 9 wherein the Z raster operations unit further comprises:

a write operation accumulation unit for receiving the merged Z data, and being

operative to accumulate portions of merged Z data that are associated with a current tile

of merged Z data; and

a compression engine for receiving the accumulated merged Z data, and being

operative to compress the accumulated merged Z data to provide compressed Z write data

to the memory interface unit to be written to the Z buffer in a compressed format.

17. (original) A computer graphics system as recited in claim 1 further comprising a

depth buffer client communicatively coupled with the memory interface unit of the

graphics processing unit, the client being operative to generate write requests, write

address information, and write Z data to be written to the depth buffer, the memory

interface being responsive to the write requests and operative to perform read modify

write operations for writing the write Z data to the depth buffer for the client.

18. (original) A computer graphics system as recited in claim 17 wherein the read

modify write operations performed by the memory interface unit comprise the steps of:

determining whether a memory location of the depth buffer indicated by the write

address information includes a portion of compressed Z data stored therein in a

compressed format; and

if the tile region has a compressed portion of Z data stored therein,

reading the compressed portion of Z data from the depth buffer, and

decompressing the compressed portion of Z data.

19. (original)   A computer graphics system as recited in claim 17 wherein the depth buffer client is a central processing unit executing a graphics application.

20. (original)   A computer graphics system as recited in claim 17 wherein the depth buffer client is a 2D graphics engine.

21. (original)   A computer graphics system as recited in claim 1 wherein:

the graphics engine is operative to generate memory address values each being indicative of an associated memory address location of the depth buffer; and

the memory interface unit is responsive to the memory address values, and is operative to determine compression status information associated with at least a portion of the memory address values, the compression status information indicating whether an associated portion of Z data stored in the associated memory address location of the depth buffer is stored in a compressed format, or an uncompressed format, the memory interface unit being operative to perform the steps of,

if the compression status information indicates that the associated portion of data is stored in the depth buffer in an uncompressed format, accessing the associated portion of Z data from the depth buffer during a first number of clock cycles, and

if the compression status information indicates that the associated portion of data is stored in the depth buffer in a compressed format, accessing the compressed portion of Z data from the depth buffer during a second number of

clock cycles wherein the second number of clock cycles is less than the first number of clock cycles.

22. (original) A computer graphics system as recited in claim 21 wherein the memory interface unit further comprises a tag memory storage unit for storing the compression status information, the tag memory storage unit being responsive to a particular one of the memory address values, and operative to provide the compression status information associated with the particular memory address value.

23. (original) A computer graphics system as recited in claim 2 wherein:

the graphics engine is operative to generate tile memory address values indicative of associated tile regions of the depth buffer, each tile region providing for storage of an associated tile of Z data, each of the tiles of Z data including a plurality of tile portions of Z data, the graphics engine also being operative to generate fetch mask information associated with each of the tile memory address values, the fetch mask information indicating specified ones of the tile portions of the associated tile of Z data, the specified tile portions to be read from the depth buffer; and

the memory interface unit is responsive to the tile memory address values, and the associated fetch mask information, and operative to determine compression status information associated with at least a portion of the memory address values, the compression status information indicating whether the associated tile of Z data is stored at the associated tile region in a compressed format, or in an uncompressed format, the memory interface unit being operative to perform the steps of,

if the compression status information indicates that the associated tile is a

compressed tile that is stored in the depth buffer in a compressed format,

accessing the compressed format tile using the associated tile memory address

value, and

if the compression status information indicates that the associated tile of

data is stored in the depth buffer in an uncompressed format, accessing only the

specified tile portions of the associated tile of Z data that are specified by the

associated fetch mask information.

24. (original) A computer graphics system as recited in claim 4 wherein:

the graphics engine is operative to compress a tile of Z data to generate a

compressed tile of Z data including,

a first compressed data portion including a portion of the compressed data,

and fast clear information indicative of whether the compressed tile of Z data

represents background initialization Z data for clearing the depth buffer, and if not

fast clear compressed, a second compressed data portion; and

the memory interface unit is responsive to the compressed tile of Z data, and

operative to read the fast clear information, and further operative to perform the steps of,

if the fast clear information indicates that the compressed tile represents

initialization Z data, writing only the first compressed data portion to the depth

buffer, and

if the fast clear information does not indicate that the compressed tile represents initialization Z data, writing the first and second compressed data portions to the depth buffer.

25. (previously amended)   A graphics processing unit for processing image data including Z data for use in displaying three dimensional images, the graphics processing unit being adapted for coupling with a depth buffer via a depth buffer interface, the depth buffer providing for temporary storage of Z data, the graphics processing unit being operative to compress at least a portion of the Z data, to write the compressed portion of Z data to the depth buffer via the depth buffer interface in a compressed format, to read portions of compressed Z data from the depth buffer via the depth buffer interface, and to decompress the compressed Z data read from the depth buffer, the graphics processing unit comprising:

a graphics engine for generating image data including Z data; and

a memory interface unit communicatively coupled to the graphics engine and being adapted for communicative coupling with a depth buffer via a depth buffer interface;

wherein the graphics processing unit is operative to perform read modify write operations including the steps of:

reading previous Z data from the depth buffer via the memory unit interface and the depth buffer interface;

merging the previous read Z data with associated portions of the generated Z data to provide merged Z data; and

writing the merged Z data to the depth buffer via the memory unit interface and the depth buffer interface.

26. (previously cancelled)

27. (previously amended)   A graphics processing unit as recited in claim 25 being further operative to compress selected ones of a plurality of tiles of the generated Z data based on a quantitative analysis of the Z data, each of the tiles of Z data having a plurality of pixels arranged in an array, each of the pixels being disposed at an associated (X,Y) coordinate of the array, and having an associated Z value.

28. (original)   A graphics processing unit as recited in claim 27 being further operative to perform a process of compressing a tile of Z data, the process including a step of determining a plane based on the (X,Y) coordinates and associated Z values of selected ones of the pixels of the tile.

29. (original)   A graphics processing unit as recited in claim 27 being further operative to perform a process of compressing a tile of Z data, the process comprising the steps of:

reading an anchor Z value associated with a selected anchor pixel of the tile;

reading a major horizontal Z value associated with a major horizontal pixel displaced a first predetermined number of pixels in a horizontal direction from the anchor pixel;

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determining a major horizontal difference value between the anchor Z value and the major horizontal Z value;

determining a horizontal gradient value based on the horizontal difference value and the first predetermined number of pixels;

reading a major vertical Z value associated with a major vertical pixel displaced a second predetermined number of pixels in a vertical direction from the anchor pixel;

determining a major vertical difference value between the anchor Z value and the major vertical Z value;

determining a vertical gradient value based on the vertical difference value and the second predetermined number of pixels;

determining an ideal plane based on the anchor Z value, the horizontal gradient value, and the vertical gradient value;

for each of a plurality of remaining pixels of the tile, determining an associated ideal Z value lying in the ideal plane at the (X,Y) coordinate of the associated remaining pixel; and

for each of the remaining pixels, determining an associated minor Z difference value by determining a difference between the associated ideal Z value and the associated Z value.

30. (previously amended)   A graphics processing unit as recited in claim 25 wherein the graphics engine comprises:

a plurality of graphics pipeline stages for generating image data including Z data; and

a Z raster operations unit communicatively coupled with the memory interface

unit, the Z raster operations unit for receiving the generated Z data, and being operative

to compress selected portions of the generated Z data, to receive compressed Z data from

the depth buffer via the memory unit interface and the depth buffer interface, and to

decompress the compressed Z data.

31. (previously cancelled)

32. (previously amended)   A graphics processing unit as recited in claim 25 wherein

the graphics processing unit is operative to perform read modify write operations

including the steps of:.

· reading previous compressed Z data from the depth buffer via the memory unit

interface and the depth buffer interface;

decompressing the read Z data;

merging the decompressed read Z data with associated portions of the generated Z

data to provide merged Z data; and

writing the merged Z data to the depth buffer via the memory unit interface and

the depth buffer interface.

33. (previously amended)   A graphics processing unit as recited in claim 25 wherein

the read modify write operations further include the steps of:

compressing the merged Z data; and

writing the merged Z data to the depth buffer via the memory unit interface and the depth buffer interface in a compressed format.

34. (original)   A graphics processing unit as recited in claim 32 wherein the read modify write operations further include the steps of:

compressing the merged Z data; and

writing the merged Z data to the depth buffer via the memory unit interface and the depth buffer interface in a compressed format.

35. (original)   A graphics processing unit as recited in claim 27 wherein the Z raster operations unit.is operative to perform read modify write operations including the steps of:

reading a tile of previous Z data from the depth buffer via the memory unit interface and the depth buffer interface;

merging the previous read Z data with associated portions of the generated Z data to provide a tile of merged Z data;

determining if the tile of merged Z data may be compressed; and

if the merged Z data may be compressed, writing the tile of merged Z data to the depth buffer via the memory unit interface and the depth buffer interface in a compressed format.

36. (original)   A graphics processing unit as recited in claim 27 wherein the Z raster operations unit comprises:

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a read operation data accumulation unit for receiving the generated Z data, and

being operative to accumulate portions of generated Z data associated with a current tile

region, and to provide the accumulated Z data;

a decompression engine for receiving a previously written compressed tile of read

Z data that is read from the Z buffer via the memory interface unit in a compressed

format, the decompression engine being operative to decompress the previously written

compressed tile to provide decompressed read Z data; and

a test unit for receiving the accumulated Z data and the decompressed read Z data,

and being operative to compare portions of the accumulated Z data with portions of the

decompressed read data, and being operative to provide selected Z data.

37. (previously amended)   A graphics processing unit as recited in claim 25 wherein

the graphics processing unit further comprises:

a write operation accumulation unit for receiving the merged Z data, and being

operative to accumulate portions of merged Z data that are associated with a current tile

of merged Z data; and

a compression engine for receiving the accumulated merged Z data, and being

operative to compress the accumulated merged Z data to provide compressed Z write data

to the memory interface unit to be written to the Z buffer in a compressed format.

38. (original) A graphics processing unit as recited in claim 26 wherein:

the graphics engine is operative to generate memory address values each being

indicative of an associated memory address location of the depth buffer; and

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the memory interface unit is responsive to the memory address values, and is

operative to determine compression status information associated with at least a portion

of the memory address values, the compression status information indicating whether an

associated portion of Z data stored in the associated memory address location of the depth

buffer is stored in a compressed format, or an uncompressed format, the memory

interface unit being operative to perform the steps of,

if the compression status information indicates that the associated portion of data

is stored in the depth buffer in an uncompressed format, accessing the associated portion

of Z data from the depth buffer during a first number of clock cycles, and

if the compression status information indicates that the associated portion of data

is stored in the depth buffer in a compressed format, accessing the compressed portion of

Z data from the depth buffer during a second number of clock cycles wherein the second

number of clock cycles is less than the first number of clock cycles.

39. (previously amended)   A graphics processing unit as recited in claim 25 wherein

the memory interface unit further comprises a tag memory storage unit for storing the

compression status information, the tag memory storage unit being responsive to a

particular one of the memory address values, and operative to provide the compression

status information associated with the particular memory address value.

40. (original) A graphics processing unit as recited in claim 27 wherein:

the graphics engine is operative to generate tile memory address values indicative

of associated tile regions of the depth buffer, each tile region providing for storage of an

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associated tile of Z data, each of the tiles of Z data including a plurality of tile portions of

Z data, the graphics engine also being operative to generate fetch mask information

associated with each of the tile memory address values, the fetch mask information

indicating specified ones of the tile portions of the associated tile of Z data, the specified

tile portions to be read from the depth buffer; and

the memory interface unit is responsive to the tile memory address values, and the

associated fetch mask information, and operative to determine compression status

information associated with at least a portion of the memory address values, the

compression status information indicating whether the associated tile of Z data is stored

at the associated tile region in a compressed format, or in an uncompressed format, the

memory interface unit being operative to perform the steps of:

if the compression status information indicates that the associated tile is a

compressed tile that is stored in the depth buffer in a compressed format, accessing the

compressed format tile using the associated tile memory address value, and

if the compression status information indicates that the associated tile of data is

stored in the depth buffer in an uncompressed format, accessing only the specified tile

portions of the associated tile of Z data that are specified by the associated fetch mask

information.

41. (original) A graphics processing unit as recited in claim 27 wherein:

the graphics engine is operative to compress a tile of Z data to generate a

compressed tile of Z data including,

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a first compressed data portion including a portion of the compressed data, and

fast clear information indicative of whether the compressed tile of Z data represents

background initialization Z data for clearing the depth buffer, and if not fast clear

compressed, a second compressed data portion; and

the memory interface unit is responsive to the compressed tile of Z data, and

operative to read the fast clear information, and further operative to perform the steps of,

if the fast clear information indicates that the compressed tile represents

initialization Z data, writing only the first compressed data portion to the depth buffer,

and

if the fast clear information does not indicate that the compressed tile represents

initialization Z data, writing the first and second compressed data portions to the depth

buffer.

42. (previously cancelled)

43. (previously cancelled)

44. (previously cancelled)

45. (previously cancelled)

46. (previously cancelled)

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Page 22

47. (previously cancelled)

48. (previously cancelled)

49. (previously cancelled)

50. (previously cancelled)

51. (previously cancelled)

52. (previously cancelled)

53. (previously cancelled)

54. (amended) A method for storing depth data, the method comprising:

identifying a plurality of pixels, each of the plurality of pixels associated with a

corresponding depth value;

determining whether the depth values associated with the plurality of pixels are

compressible;

responsive to the depth values associated with the plurality of pixels being

compressible, compressing the depth values and storing at least an indication of the

compressed depth values in a compressed format; and

responsive to the depth values associated with the plurality of pixels being non-

compressible, storing at least an indication of the depth values in a non-compressed form;

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wherein determining whether the depth values are compressible comprises:

determining a gradient corresponding to a depth value associated with a

first pixel and a depth value associated with a second pixel:

wherein the first pixel and the second pixel are included in the identified

plurality of pixels.

55. (canceled)

56. (amended) The method of claim 54 claim 55, wherein determining whether the depth

values are compressible further comprises:

determining whether the gradient is greater than a threshold value;

whereby the depth values associated with the plurality of pixels are determined to

be non-compressible when the gradient is greater than the threshold value.

57. (amended) The method of claim 54 claim 55, wherein determining a gradient

comprises:

determining a difference between the depth value for the first pixel and the depth

value for the second pixel.

58. (previously added) The method of claim 57, wherein determining a difference

comprises:

determining a horizontal difference.

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59. (previously added) The method of claim 57, wherein determining a difference

comprises:

determining a vertical difference.

60. (previously added)   The method of claim 54, wherein determining whether the

depth values associated with the plurality of pixels are compressible comprises:

determining a difference between the depth value for the first pixel and the depth

value for the second pixel.

REMARKS

Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the present application in which

claims 54 and 56-59 are amended, and claim 55 is canceled. The subject matter of claim

55, which stands as only objected to, has been incorporated into claim 54. Consequently,

applicants submit that claim 54 and all claims dependent there from are in condition for

allowance. All other pending claims have been indicated as allowable.

Applicants respectfully submit that no further impediments exist to the allowance

of this application and, therefore, solicit an indication of allowability.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any appropriate fees

under 37 C.F.R. §§1.16, 1.17, and 1.21 that may be required by this paper, and to

credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 03-3117.

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Respectfully submitted,

COOLEY GODWARD LLP

By:

Wayne O. Stacy
Reg. No. 45,125

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The following has been received in the U.S. Patent Office on the date stamped hereon:

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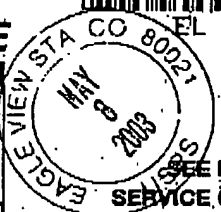Express Mail Label No. EL 955495053 US

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RE: NVID-030/00US/P000172

NUMBER OF PAGES, INCLUDING COVER PAGE: 46	Client Number: 140060-2064

MESSAGE:

Good afternoon, Ms. Resper, following up on our conversation on Tuesday, 2/10/04, with respect to the status of this application, enclosed are copies of the following documents:

1.   9/11/03 - Transmittal forwarding Petition Requesting Withdrawal of Holding of Abandonment;
        9/11/03 - Petition Requesting Withdrawal of Holding of Abandonment;
        9/11/03 — Conformed Express Mail receipt showing mailing of 9/11/03 Materials
2.   8/13/03 — Transmittal forwarding Notice of Appeal and related papers
        8/13/03 — Petition for Extension of Time
        8/13/03 — Notice of Appeal from the Examiner to the Board of Patent Appeals and Interferences;
        8/13/03 — Conformed Postcard showing receipt of 8/13/03 Materials by PTO
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RE: NVID-030/00US/P000172

NUMBER OF PAGES, INCLUDING COVER PAGE: 46	Client Number: 140080-2004

MESSAGE:

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    9/11/03 - Petition Requesting Withdrawal of Holding of Abandonment;
    9/11/03 — Conformed Express Mail receipt showing mailing of 9/11/03 Materials
2.   8/13/03 – Transmittal forwarding Notice of Appeal and related papers
    8/13/03 — Petition for Extension of Time
    8/13/03 – Notice of Appeal from the Examiner to the Board of Patent Appeals and Interferences;
    8/13/03 – Conformed Postcard showing receipt of 8/13/03 Materials by PTO
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3.   5/9/03 - Transmittal of Response to Office Action;
    5/9/03 – Response to 2/13/03 Office Action;
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Please contact me to discuss the current status of this case. Thank you. Wayne Stacy

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